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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fifty-fifth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017) and paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for August 2018.

II. Major developments

Box 1
Key points: August 2018

1. Concern around the prospect of military operations in the Idlib de-escalation area grew significantly during the reporting period, with airstrikes and explosions in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates between 10 and 12 August resulting in civilian deaths and injuries. Reports were received of attacks affecting several health facilities, and school activities in a number of areas were suspended.

2. Humanitarian organizations continued to respond to needs in Idlib and across the north-west of the country, drawing on cross-border assistance channels, while coordinating readiness efforts, including the pre-positioning of aid supplies, in view of the growing threat of large-scale displacement linked to expanded military operations in the area.

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3. In the south-west of the country, the Government consolidated its control over the Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates, as well as the vast majority of Suwayda' Governorate. Most of the approximately 325,000 people estimated to have been newly displaced in the area since late June were reported to have returned to their areas of origin. However, as at mid-August, an estimated 60,000 people remained displaced and high levels of humanitarian needs persisted, including among returnees. The United Nations continued to provide humanitarian aid in the area in partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, including through inter-agency convoys to Dar'a al-Balad on 9 August and Busra al-Sham on 16 August. However, access to many areas remained limited for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners.

4. In eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, fighting between Syrian Democratic Forces and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued to have an impact on civilians, with reports that more than 20,000 people were displaced to makeshift camps between late July and early August. Humanitarian access to many of these sites was very limited, while there were also reports that the majority of the displaced people were prevented from leaving, with exceptions only for some medical cases.

5. In eastern Ghutah, the return of displaced people and the resumption of commercial activities continued to be reported. However, the freedom of movement of civilians and access to the area for humanitarian organizations remained very limited, hindering efforts to scale up assistance and provide much-needed services, including for returnees. Humanitarian assistance continued to be channelled through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

6. United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners continued to reach millions of people in need. Humanitarian assistance provided from within the country by United Nations agencies reached more than 2.37 million people with food assistance. Three inter-agency humanitarian convoys carrying life-saving relief, food and medical supplies were deployed in August to the hard-to-reach locations of Irbin and Zamalka in eastern Ghutah and Busra al-Sham and al-Balad in Dar'a Governorate, reaching a total of 75,000 people in need. In August, the United Nations delivered life-saving food assistance to more than 574,000 people through cross-border deliveries.

3. Since 24 February 2018, when the Security Council adopted resolution 2401 (2018), demanding a cessation of hostilities, military conflict has continued in many parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. During the month of August, air strikes, artillery shelling, sniper fire and ground clashes were reported in the Governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah, Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah, Homs, Hama, Rif Dimashq, Qunaytirah and Suwayda'. Military operations continued between the Government and allied pro-government forces and non-State armed opposition groups. Clashes occurred between government forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. In and around the Idlib de-escalation area, government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, and their respective allies, continued to build up and fortify military positions.

4. Concern regarding the prospect of large-scale military operations in the Idlib de-escalation area grew significantly during the reporting period, with airstrikes and explosions in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates between 10 and 12 August resulting in civilian deaths and injuries. Reports were received of attacks affecting several health facilities, and school activities in a number of areas were suspended.

5. A large-scale humanitarian response operation continued across Idlib and the north-west, drawing on cross-border assistance from Turkey, delivered under the framework of Security Council resolution 2393 (2017). The United Nations estimated

that some 2.1 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in the Idlib de-escalation area, including 1.4 million internally displaced people. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners also expanded measures to prepare for the possibility of large-scale civilian displacement linked to potential military operations in the area. A readiness plan was developed, requesting $311 million to provide multisectoral assistance to up to 900,000 people who could become newly displaced in the event of a major military escalation, including up to 700,000 people expected to be accessible only through cross-border channels. However, humanitarian organizations continued to stress that a worst-case scenario in Idlib would exceed the planning figures set out in the readiness plan, resulting in needs that would overwhelm the response capacities of the United Nations and its humanitarian partners.

6. In the south-west of the country, military activity decreased significantly, with the Government having consolidated its control over the Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates, as well as the vast majority of Suwayda' Governorate. Most of the approximately 325,000 people estimated to have been newly displaced in the area since late June were reported to have returned to their areas of origin. However, as at mid-August, an estimated 60,000 people remained displaced and high levels of humanitarian needs persisted, including among returnees. The United Nations continued to provide humanitarian aid in the area in partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, including through inter-agency convoys to Dar'a al-Balad on 9 August and Busra al-Sham on 16 August, which delivered hygiene kits, nutrition supplies and sanitary and household items for a total of 40,000 people. Some 74,000 people in Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates were also reached with food assistance, delivered in partnership with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. However, access to many areas remained limited for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners.

7. In eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, fighting continued to have an impact on civilians, with reports that more than 20,000 people were displaced to makeshift camps between late July and early August. Humanitarian access to many of these sites was very limited, while there were also reports that the majority of the displaced people were prevented from leaving to reach other areas in southern Hasakah or Raqqah, with exceptions for some medical cases. As at 25 August, 723 cases of acute diarrhoea, resulting in 12 deaths, had been reported in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate since March. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners scaled up household water chlorination and awareness-raising activities in response.

8. In eastern Ghutah, the return of displaced people and the resumption of commercial activities continued to be reported. However, the freedom of civilians to move in and out of the enclave remained restricted. Access for humanitarian organizations to the area remained very limited, hindering efforts to scale up assistance and provide much-needed services, including for returnees. Humanitarian assistance continued to be channelled through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

9. The humanitarian situation of some 45,000 people at the Rukban camp, on the Syrian-Jordanian border, continued to be of great concern. Several hundred families were reported to have moved out of the camp owing to poor living conditions, although such movement was possible only at a significant financial cost and with a significant security risk given the presence of armed actors along the route out of the camp. As the need for the provision of humanitarian assistance became increasingly urgent, with the last significant delivery of United Nations aid having taken place in January 2018, discussions on an inter-agency humanitarian convoy to the area continued.

10. My Special Envoy for Syria continued his diplomatic consultations in August. He met with the Secretary of State of the United States of America in Washington, D.C. on 15 August to discuss the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the

political process. Representatives of his office had further exchanges in Ankara, Moscow and Tehran on the establishment of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned constitutional committee, facilitated by the United Nations within the framework of the Geneva process and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

Protection

11. Despite a relative decrease in the intensity of violence, civilians continued to be severely affected by the direct and indirect consequences of hostilities. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and damage and destroy civilian infrastructure. The many civilian casualties and the scale of the destruction of civilian infrastructure remained a strong indication that violations were continuing of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution and, in particular, of the prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks.

12. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians and destroying and damaging vital infrastructure. Explosive hazard contamination in populated areas killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas added to the complexity of the explosive hazard threat. In areas retaken by government forces and their allies in Dar'a and Dayr al-Zawr, reports continued of civilian casualties caused by improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance or explosive remnants of war.

13. In Idlib and Aleppo Governorates, intermittent bombardment by government forces and their allies resulted in the killing and injuring of scores of civilians, including women and children, and the displacement of thousands of others.

14. In areas of Aleppo Governorate, infighting between non-State armed opposition groups continued to affect the well-being of civilians, owing primarily to the use of improvised explosive devices in populated areas, lawlessness and criminality, which included threats, intimidation, kidnappings and killings.

15. Fighting continued to have an impact on civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. According to information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), civilian casualties occurred in various governorates, possibly in violation of international humanitarian law (see annex). OHCHR has documented alleged violations committed by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies, and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

16. Notwithstanding the call upon the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council, in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22, to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remained limited, given that the Government had not granted it access to the country.

17. Civilians across the country also continued to be subjected to killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, deprivation of liberty, abduction, torture and inhumane, cruel and degrading treatment. OHCHR continued to receive reports of civilians being abducted or kidnapped by non-State armed opposition groups. Hundreds of men have allegedly been taken by Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham and other non-State armed opposition groups in areas of Hama, Aleppo and Idlib Governorates under the control of non-State armed opposition groups, either for ransom or reportedly because the individuals targeted were promoting reconciliation with the Government. Of particular concern were separate incidents involving the abduction of the heads of three hospitals.

18. In one incident, an unidentified number of civilians, including young men and children, were reportedly abducted by armed groups in the villages of Zarbah in south-western rural Aleppo and Mughir in northern Hama on the afternoon of 25 August. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued to hold at least 27 civilians, mainly women and children, as hostages following the group's assault on Suwayda' on 25 July. ISIL has threatened to kill them if its demands are not met by the government forces and their allies, and it has been reported that they have killed at least one of the hostages.

19. Since June 2018, more than 200 civilians have reported directly or indirectly to OHCHR that they have received official death notices for family members or relatives who had been detained at various times by the Government. All such certificates indicated that the deaths were from natural causes. A number of families stated that this was the second time that they had been notified officially of the death of their relative, while others indicated that the death certificates that they had received were dated in the 1990s, which was when their relatives had disappeared. Others said that they had become aware of the notification only when attending police or government offices for other business. Only a few bodies were returned to the families, mostly of persons who had died very recently. A number of families claim that they have been prevented from requesting an independent forensic inquest into the cause and circumstances of the deaths or are too fearful to do so.

20. The United Nations and its health partners verified several attacks affecting health-care facilities and personnel during the reporting period. On 4 August, an explosion near a hospital in Sarmin in rural Idlib caused damage to hospital windows. No casualties were reported among staff and patients. On 7 August, several persons broke into a hospital in Bdama subdistrict in Idlib and kidnapped a doctor from the facility. No actor claimed responsibility for the incident. On 10 August, airstrikes hit a dialysis centre in Kafr Nubl subdistrict in rural Idlib, damaging a pharmacy, the outer walls, oxygen cylinders and water tanks. On 10 and 11 August, heavy airstrikes near Ma'arrat al-Nu'man National Hospital resulted in hospital services being limited to emergency cases only for several days. On 22 August, an airstrike hit a hospital in Ma'arrah subdistrict. No casualties were reported. On 30 August, unidentified masked men assaulted and kidnapped a doctor and head of a local hospital in front of his home in Idlib city. The doctor was released several hours later in critical condition. Following the incident, a medical non-governmental organization (NGO) announced the temporary suspension of its activities at the hospital in question. The suspension lasted for three days, during which time the hospital continued to operate.

21. Educational facilities also continued to be affected by the conflict. On 6 August, local authorities ordered the closure of a number of private schools, including schools supported by the Christian church in Qamishli city in Hasakah Governorate. On 10 August, educational activities in Kafr Nubl and Ma'arrah in Idlib Governorate were suspended for several days owing to a heavy bombardment in the area. At least seven schools were affected by the closure.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points

1. United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian assistance provided from within the country by United Nations agencies based in the country to regularly accessible locations in government-controlled areas reached more than 2.37 million people with food assistance.

2. Three inter-agency humanitarian convoys carrying life-saving relief, food and medical supplies were deployed in August to the hard-to-reach locations of Irbin and Zamalka, in eastern Ghutah, and ad hoc deliveries were made to Dar'a al-Balad and to Busra al-Sham, both in the southern Syrian Arab Republic. Convoys to Irbin and Zamalka and to Busra al-Sham were accompanied by the United Nations. United Nations personnel were, however, not permitted to participate in the convoy to Dar'a al-Balad because security approvals had not been received from the Syrian authorities.

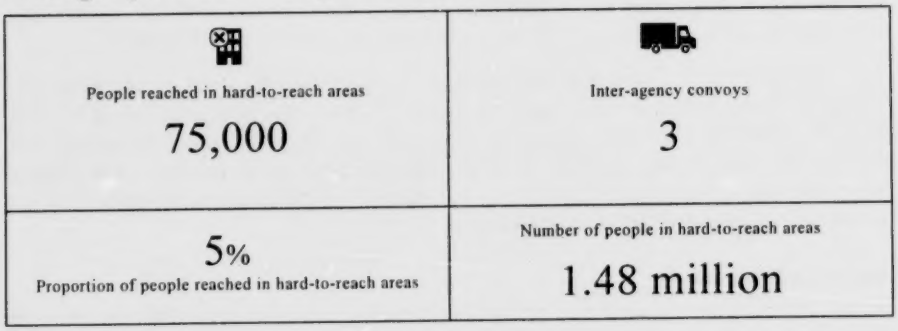
3. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017), remained a vital part of the humanitarian response. In August, 319 trucks (13 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance to more than 750,000 people through cross-border deliveries. United Nations humanitarian cross-border operations through Jordan remained suspended in August.

22. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for July and August, access was requested to 25 hard-to-reach areas, with the objective of reaching 939,300 people. In August, three inter-agency convoys were authorized to deploy to the hard-to-reach locations of Irbin and Zamalka, in eastern Ghutah, and to Dar'a al-Balad and Busra al-Sham, both in the southern Syrian Arab Republic, providing multisectoral assistance to a total of 75,000 people (see table 1 and figure I).

Table 1
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, August 2018

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*Number of beneficiaries reached*	*Type of assistance*
1 August	Irbin and Zamalka	35 000	35 000	Multisectoral
9 August	Dar'a al-Balad	Not applicable	32 500	Multisectoral
16 August	Busra al-Sham	Not applicable	7 500	Multisectoral

Figure I
Inter-agency humanitarian operations, August 2018



Humanitarian response

23. United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners reached millions of people in need, including women and children, through all available access routes, including: (a) humanitarian operations from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines; (b) cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and (c) cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided to those

in need from neighbouring countries (see tables 2 and 3). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, the Government and NGOs continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. The local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services where possible.

24. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations across the country. Such deliveries are undertaken by United Nations agencies based in Damascus to regularly accessible areas. In August, all 1,652 official requests submitted by the World Food Programme to the Syrian authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations across the country were approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted 41 requests for facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, all of which were approved. More than 2 million people were reached with multisectoral support, including 412,000 children and mothers receiving primary health-care and immunization services. In addition, an estimated 117,000 children and pregnant and lactating women were provided with nutritional supplements and services. Some 134,000 children benefited from essential learning materials and remedial education, and 190,000 children benefited from protection and psychosocial support services. Around 328,000 people were reached with reproductive health and gender-based violence services supported by the United Nations Population Fund and its partners. Approximately 2.9 million people received food assistance, and 1.7 million people benefited from water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies.

Table 2
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, August 2018

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	34 000
International Organization for Migration	71 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 860 000
United Nations Children's Fund	2 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	918 631
United Nations Population Fund	328 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	175 000
World Food Programme	2 923 515
World Health Organization	922 000

25. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure II and table 3). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

26. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations as authorized under resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017). During the reporting period, the Mechanism monitored the delivery of 13 consignments by six United Nations agencies, consisting of 319 trucks, from three border crossings: eight from Bab al-Hawa (276 trucks), four from Bab al-Salam (39 trucks) and one from Ya'rubiyah (4 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the consignments sent. The United Nations provided 48-hour notice to the Government regarding all shipments. Once in

the country, United Nations partners ensured that shipments arrived at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensured independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and monitored the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

27. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 861 cross-border consignments, with more than 21,715 trucks (14,820 through Bab al-Hawa and 2,249 through Bab al-Salam from Turkey; 4,605 through Ramtha from Jordan; and 41 through Ya'rubiyah from Iraq). Those operations complement and support the aid provided by international and Syrian NGOs that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

28. During the reporting period, humanitarian cross-border operations through Jordan remained suspended. However, the World Food Programme and its implementing partners delivered food assistance to more than 574,000 people from the two authorized cross-border entry points with Turkey. The World Health Organization also conducted health and medical deliveries, providing nearly 530,260 treatments through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) delivered winter kits and child protection assistance, as well as nutritional, educational, health, water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, through a number of cross-border shipments. More than 57,000 people had improved access to clean water through the operation and maintenance of water and sanitation systems. Primary health-care services were provided to more than 99,000 people through mobile and fixed health services. More than 16,000 children under the age of five years, as well as pregnant and lactating women, were reached with micronutrient supplies. More than 21,000 children under the age of five years, as well as pregnant and lactating women, were screened for acute malnutrition, as a result of which 247 severely malnourished children received appropriate treatment.

29. In the southern Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations humanitarian cross-border operations were suspended in late June. Those cross-border operations remained suspended throughout the reporting period. The response of the United Nations in the southern Syrian Arab Republic included the delivery of food assistance to 73,785 people during August.

30. UNHCR and its partners continued to enhance the response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and other crisis-affected populations. By the end of August, 1,108,921 individuals had been reached through protection interventions, including 825,168 benefiting from general protection activities, 164,296 benefiting from child protection activities and 119,457 reached through awareness-raising campaigns across 12 governorates on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response activities. As at the end of August 2018, the total number of functioning UNHCR-funded community centres and mobile units stood at 97 community centres, 17 satellite centres and 85 mobile units, supported by 2,315 outreach volunteers. That network provided protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, livelihood services and services for persons with specific needs, to benefit some 2.6 million internally displaced persons, returnees, members of host communities and other crisis-affected people across 12 governorates. In August, 138,551 internally displaced persons in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Suwayda', Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Hasakah were direct beneficiaries of the UNHCR legal assistance programme, including counselling; awareness sessions on legal topics, including civil

documentation and women's rights; and lawyers' direct interventions before courts and administrative bodies.

31. Moreover, the United Nations Population Fund reached some 328,000 people, carrying out activities relating to reproductive health and the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and youth-related violence. In addition, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) distributed food parcels to some 175,000 Palestine refugees, and 9,939 Palestine refugees displaced from Yarmouk, eastern Ghutah and Dar'a received ready-to-eat food baskets in August. A total of 2,645 individuals received cash assistance through the regular cash distribution round, and 1,250 Palestine refugees displaced from Yarmouk and eastern Ghutah benefited from a one-time payment of $70 per family.

Figure II
Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, August 2018

(Thousands)

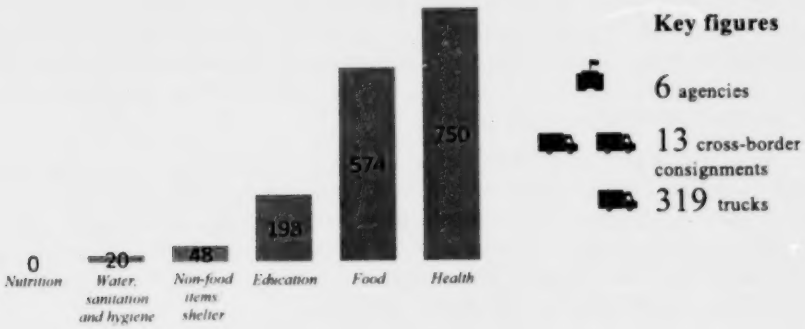


Table 3
Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, August 2018

Governorate	*District*	*Education*	*Food*	*Health*	*Non-food items shelter*	*Nutrition*	*Water, sanitation and hygiene*
Aleppo	I'zaz	–	91 450	–	18 000	–	–
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	27 000	79 880	90 950	10 400	–	5 000
Hasakah	Qamishli	–	–	110 500	–	–	–
Hama	Suqaylibiyah	–	–	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	65 600	95 710	–	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	30 000	79 360	–	–	–
Idlib	Harim	19 005	276 510	231 840	14 200	–	10 000
Idlib	Idlib	152 330	30 785	117 170	5 400	–	5 000
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	–	24 280	–	–	–

32. The Russian Federation sent informational bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which it outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

33. A total of 41 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government in August. Of those, 18 were approved, 22 remained pending (taking into consideration that 14 of the requests were submitted late in August) and 1 was cancelled by the United Nations. Of the 26 previously submitted visa applications that remained pending at the beginning of the reporting period, 17 were approved in August, 8 remained pending and 1 was rejected. A total of 64 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in August, of which 28 were approved and 36 remained pending (taking into consideration that 22 requests were submitted late in August). Of the 39 previously submitted visa renewal requests that remained pending at the beginning of the reporting period, 35 were approved in August and 4 remained pending.

34. A total of 24 international NGOs are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

35. Agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system continued to implement programmes in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, air strikes, the regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetrical attacks. As a result of activities relating to the armed conflict, significant populated areas became highly contaminated with unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and landmines, which pose an elevated risk to the implementation of humanitarian activities in those areas.

36. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations and organizations of the United Nations system, 18 of whom were staff members of UNRWA; 66 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent; and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national NGOs have also reportedly been killed.

37. A total of 27 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 26 UNRWA staff members) were detained or missing as at the end of the reporting period.

III. Observations

38. I am deeply concerned about the growing risk of a humanitarian catastrophe in in Idlib Governorate and the surrounding areas that form part of the last de-escalation zone in the Syrian Arab Republic. Close to 3 million people are currently in that area, of whom some 2.1 million are already in need of humanitarian assistance. That includes some 1.4 million people who are internally displaced, many of whom are in overcrowded camps, in which basic services have for months been stretched to breaking point. A major military operation in such a setting could create an emergency at a scale not yet seen in the more than seven years of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

39. I have appealed to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and to respect their obligation under international humanitarian law to protect civilians, who make up the vast majority of the population in Idlib and the surrounding areas. I condemn the abuses perpetrated against civilians in Idlib and elsewhere, which have included threats, intimidation, kidnappings and killings, as well as restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

40. I remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian objects; not to make civilian objects the target of attack and to take special care in military operations to avoid damage to buildings dedicated to education, including schools; and to respect and protect medical personnel and not to direct attacks against hospitals and other medical facilities. I recall that any use of chemical weapons is unlawful and completely unacceptable. Moreover, the parties should ensure civilians' freedom of movement and must continue to protect civilians whether they choose to move or remain.

41. Ensuring safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access through the most direct routes is critical to avoid a further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis. I note in that regard that cross-border humanitarian assistance continues to provide an indispensable lifeline for hundreds of thousands of people, notably in Idlib and elsewhere across the Syrian Arab Republic. I recall that, in its resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017), the Security Council allows for cross-border assistance to be provided through the most direct routes to reach those in need. As I have stated previously, all methods of delivery are essential to the efficient and effective provision of humanitarian assistance and to ensuring a needs-based response.

42. I reiterate that the perpetrators of serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. Such a step is central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

43. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, all States, civil society and the United Nations system to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, in particular by providing information and documentation.

44. As regards the persons reported missing as a result of the armed conflict, it remains incumbent on the parties to the conflict to take all measures feasible, in association with mandated international bodies, where relevant, to account for them. I am particularly concerned about the fate and well-being of persons who have been detained by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic or non-State armed opposition groups. I call upon all parties to ensure that persons deprived of their liberty are treated humanely, allowed to correspond with their families and not sentenced without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all judicial guarantees that are generally recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

45. In view of the serious ongoing concerns repeatedly raised by OHCHR with regard to the protection of civilians and other human rights issues in the Syrian Arab Republic, I strongly urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with Human Rights Council resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22, to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights.

46. I continue to urge all parties to support my Special Envoy as he pursues his efforts to support a sustainable political solution. I continue to call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and Syrian opposition actors to cooperate with the efforts of my Special Envoy to reach a political solution. The efforts of the United Nations have only one goal, which should be shared by us all: to end the suffering of the Syrian people and find a sustainable solution to the conflict in the country through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012.

Annex

Reported incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, August 2018*

Aleppo Governorate

- On 10 August, at least 41 civilians, including 7 women and 20 children, were killed and dozens of civilians were injured when what was allegedly an airstrike hit a residential neighbourhood in the Urum al-Kubra area in opposition-held western rural Aleppo Governorate. The airstrike reportedly resulted in significant material damage.
- On 12 August, two adult sisters were abducted by masked armed men from their home in the Zaydiyah neighbourhood of Afrin. According to the information received, the perpetrators were alleged to be members of the military police of the non-State armed opposition groups operating in the area.
- On 13 August, one civilian woman was killed and three children were injured when an improvised explosive device, reportedly attached to a motorcycle, detonated at around 3 p.m. in the vicinity of the Grand Mosque near the Bayt al-Qanun area in Jarabulus. The device reportedly detonated close to a vehicle of the non-State armed opposition group Jabhah al-Shamaliyah.
- On 14 August, at least five civilians were captured by the military police of non-State armed opposition groups in the village of Korzileh, in the Shirawa area of Afrin district.
- On 29 August, members of non-State armed opposition groups raided the house of the Deputy Chief of the Ma'batli local council in the village of Qantarah, in the Ma'batli area of Afrin district. The perpetrators physically assaulted him and his family members then fled the area.

Ladhiqiyah Governorate

- On 7 August, unknown masked armed men abducted the health director of the Al-Sahel Hospital, near the village of Ayn al-Bayda in opposition-held rural Ladhiqiyah. The perpetrators reportedly took him from his residence inside the hospital after having beaten and handcuffed the security guards and stolen a hospital vehicle. He was released on 12 August, reportedly after a ransom was paid.

Suwayda' Governorate

- On 2 August, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) reportedly beheaded a civilian hostage that the group had abducted from eastern rural Suwayda' on 25 July, along with several other civilians, including women and children. ISIL issued a video of the beheading, in which it identified the young man's name and village (Shabki) and demanded the release of ISIL members in the custody of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in exchange for the release of civilian hostages being held by ISIL.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of incidents that are reported to have occurred during the month relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Cessefire of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

Dar'a Governorate

- On 2 August, six civilian men from two families from the Ma'arriyah Valley, in the Yarmouk Basin in western rural Dar'a Governorate, were arrested by government security forces during a screening process conducted in the Ma'arriyah camp for internally displaced persons. The men were reportedly internally displaced persons from Shajarah in the Yarmouk Basin who had fled that town owing to the intensified bombardment there. On the same day, at least 72 other men were reportedly arrested by government security forces in house raids in the Lajah region of north-eastern Dar'a.
- On 11 August, 10 men who reportedly had been on board buses evacuating around 500 persons (including non-State armed opposition fighters and their families, as well as civilians who had refused to reconcile with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic) from the town of Jasim in western rural Dar'a to Idlib Governorate were arrested by Government security forces. The buses were stopped in the town of Jibab, in Dar'a, at a checkpoint controlled by members of the Air Force Intelligence, who reportedly boarded the buses with masked men, who identified the men as being ISIL affiliates. On the same day, at least 25 other men were arrested by government forces in the town of Da'il in western Dar'a Governorate for unknown reasons; 12 of those men were reportedly released a few hours later, after Russian forces allegedly reassured the local population that those found not to be linked with ISIL would be released.
- Between 4 and 16 August, nine civilians, including one woman and two children, were killed as a result of unexploded ordnance that detonated in different areas in Dar'a Governorate. On 4 August, two children were killed in the towns of Shajarah and Nahtah in eastern and western rural Dar'a.
- Between 18 and 22 August, five civilian men were reportedly arrested after their homes were raided by members of the Air Force Intelligence in the towns of Mahajjah, Uthman, Jibab and Sayda in rural Dar'a Governorate. Unconfirmed reports suggested they had been accused of affiliation with ISIL.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 23 August, a child was killed and three other civilians were injured when unexploded ordnance detonated in the village of Kashmah in the eastern rural Albu Kamal area of eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.
- On 29 August, a civilian was killed when unexploded ordnance detonated in the village of Mahkan in eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr.

Idlib Governorate

- On 2 August, at around 3 p.m., a civilian woman was killed and 10 other civilians were injured in what was allegedly an attack employing a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that detonated in a garage area in the centre of Idlib.
- On 6, 8 and 9 August, Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham — an Al-Qaeda affiliate — and other non-State armed opposition groups imposed curfews and captured civilians in southern and eastern Idlib Governorate and in northern rural Hama Governorate. Reportedly, hundreds of civilian men who had been accused of promoting reconciliation with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were captured and detained at unknown places run by Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham and non-State armed opposition groups. Unconfirmed reports suggested that many of those detained had been released, but the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights could not substantiate such reports. Non-State armed opposition groups have reportedly told the population in Idlib that they would capture anyone who called for reconciliation deals with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

- On 10 August, 12 civilians were reportedly killed and 38 civilians were injured when what were alleged to be airstrikes and ground-based strikes hit areas of western and southern rural Idlib, bordering Ladhiqiyah and Hama Governorates, including the following:
  - Seven civilians, including 2 women, were killed and 23 civilians were injured in Khan Shaykhun district in southern rural Idlib
  - Three civilians, including 1 child, were killed and 2 civilians were injured, including 1 woman, in the town of Tah in Khan Shaykhun
  - Twelve civilians were injured, including 2 women and 2 children, in the area of Tamani'ah, in south-eastern Idlib
  - One civilian was injured in the town of Kafr Ayn
  - One civilian was killed in Jisr al-Shughur, in western rural Idlib
- On 11 August, a child was killed when what was alleged to be an airstrike hit the town of Tamani'ah, in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man district of southern rural Idlib.
- On 12 August, 67 persons, including at least 6 women and 10 children, were reportedly killed and 37 persons were injured in a massive explosion inside a residential building in the Bab al-Hawa neighbourhood of the town of Dana, in northern Idlib. Conflicting reports suggested that the building had either been a weapons depot that had exploded for unknown reasons, or that the explosion had occurred while non-State armed opposition groups were making improvised explosive devices inside the residential building.
- On 13 August, a woman was killed in the village of Tah and a child was killed in the village of Tahtaya, both in Khan Shaykhun district, in what were alleged to be ground-based strikes.
- On 13 August, the health director of the al-Imad Hospital in Khan Shaykhun, southern rural Idlib,H was abducted from his hospital, reportedly by members of Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham. He was released less than 24 hours later. The reasons for his kidnapping and release are unknown.
- On 19 August, at least 13 civilian men from the villages of Salqin, Azmarin and Ma'arratmisrin in northern rural Idlib were taken from their homes after raids by Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham. Reportedly, the men had been accused of promoting reconciliation with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.
- On 29 August, reportedly no fewer than 30 civilian men from the villages of Buraysah, Tall al-Shih, Halbah and Eastern Dayr in eastern rural Idlib were taken from their homes after raids by Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham. Reportedly, the men had been accused of promoting reconciliation with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.
- On 30 August, between 10 and 11 p.m., the health director of the specialized surgical hospital in Idlib was abducted from his house in the city by unidentified masked armed men. Reportedly, civilians found him unconscious a few hours later on a street in the Ma'arratmisrin area, located around 9 km north of Idlib. The doctor was taken to hospital for treatment, and preliminary photographs taken of him suggested that his body bore signs of torture and abuse.